

November 30, 1967

Dr. Ntinios C. Myrianthopoulos  
Head, Section on Epidemiology and Genetics  
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Bethesda, Maryland 20014

Dear Dr. Myrianthopoulos:

Thank you for your letter of November 14. I am also very grateful for the opportunity of talking to you, briefly as it was, on November 21.

Our discussion pointed to the possibility of a collaboration to investigate the impact of exceptionally high birthweight on subsequent development. My colleague, Dr. Marguerite Kirsch, and I are very much interested in this question, and also share your interest in the factors that determine birthweight. A perinatal study seems to me very well suited for such investigation, and we have already discussed some details about the first examination of the data. I hope you will be able to give some attention to the production of a selected file, which probably should include the complete record now available, covering the heaviest 1% of the subjects in the study. This would be achieved by selecting those infants with a recorded birthweight of approximately 4500 grams or more.

We had some discussion about the choice of a control subfile for comparative purposes. I do not wish to perturb our previous conclusions, but may I throw in one other suggestion, and then leave it to your own judgment for the immediate conclusion. That is, to select a subgroup, those infants in a range of birthweight corresponding to the fiftieth percentile of birthweight. I think it would be futile to attempt a closer matching of the other variables which may themselves control birthweight.

Eventually it will be desirable to construct a corrected birthweight index to characterize those infants whose birthweight is exceptionally high, taking account of such obvious parameters as maturity, race, sex, and parental stature. We can, however, do our preliminary study of such an index with the smaller samples I have just mentioned, and in view of the pressure on computer time in your own operation, I would not now recommend any more sophisticated screening.

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You also mentioned the special study of infants whose mothers had registered at the Joslyn Clinic, and this is of course of particular interest to us.

The opportunities opened up by our conversation are very exciting, and I look forward to their continued exploration.

Yours cordially,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics